



CHRISSIE GITTINS

Chrissie Gittins was born in Lancashire and studied at Newcastle University and St Martin's School of Art. She worked as an artist and a teacher before becoming a full-time freelance writer. She writes poetry, radio drama and short stories for adults, and poetry for children. She was awarded a fellowship at **Hawthornden Castle** in 2001 and has received awards from the Society of Authors and the Royal Literary Fund. Chrissie was awarded an **Arts Council Grant for the Arts** in 2005 to complete her collection of short stories. She lives in Forest Hill in South London and frequently travels north to Ramsbottom.



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Now You See Me
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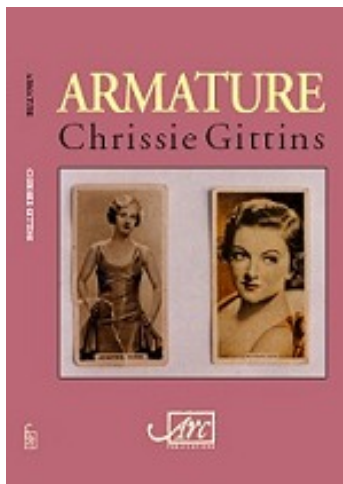
Scottish Poetry Library:
spl.org.uk/youngpeople

Reviews/quotes

'a true original ... she has a genuine gift,'
Jane Yeh, Poetry Review

'a wonderful collection,'
Jon Snow

Poetry Collection



Her first adult collection is ***Armature*** (Arc Publications, 2003): 'they are exceptional ... visual, aural, emotional and sparse,' *Maureen Lipman*. Her poems have been broadcast on BBC R4 and the World Service, and published in *The Observer* and *The Independent* on Sunday. She has read at the **Royal Festival Hall**, the **Edinburgh Book Festival**, **Keats House Hampstead**, the **Aldeburgh Poetry Festival**, the **British Council Bangkok**, the **Poets House** and the **Bowery Poetry Club, New York**.

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'a voice refusing to be pinned down,'
Moniza Alvi

'a great sense of humour, an ear for what life sounds like,'
Helen Dunmore

'weird, interesting and humorous poems that will bear repeated visits,'
Roger Stevens, Poetry Zone website

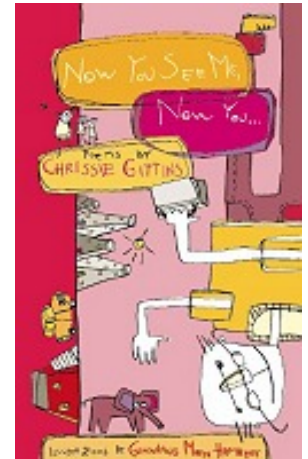
'a McGough-like flair for idiomatic surrealism,'
Michael Thorn, TES

'I very much enjoyed reading your collection of children's poetry,'
Estelle Morris

Children's Poetry Collection

Chrissie's first children's poetry collection ***Now You See Me, Now You*** (Rabbit Hole Publications, 2003) was shortlisted for the first 2003 **CLPE Poetry Award**; 'Chrissie Gittins has a McGough-like flair for idiomatic surrealism,' *Michael Thorn, TES*. Her children's poems appear in **Macmillan, Pearson Education** and **Hodder Wayland** anthologies. Chrissie won the category for poems for 9-12 year olds in the 2002 **Belmont Poetry Prize** and was a runner up in the category for 5-8 year olds. She's appeared in the **Children's Book Show**, the **Northern Children's Book Festival**, the **Highland Festival** and the **Swindon Literature Festival**.

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Chrissie's short stories have won competitions, been published in magazines and anthologies, and read on BBC R4 by **Anne Reid, Stephanie Cole** and **Penelope Wilton**. Her BBC duologue *Poles Apart* was a Radio Times Radio Choice and received 'an early and deserved repeat,' *Anne Karpf, The Guardian*. 'A richly rewarding account of the friendship that developed between a wealthy Conservative ex-Minister and a working class Socialist, after the latter, Bill Wheeler, livened up an otherwise exclusively Tory meeting that the former, Sir Anthony Nutting, was addressing as parliamentary candidate for Oldham. With **Bernard Cribbins** as Wheeler and **Peter Jeffrey** as Nutting.' *The Observer*. Directed by Martin Jenkins.

Her R4 afternoon play – *Starved for Love* – starred **Patricia Routledge** and was also a Radio Times Radio Choice. 'A striking play ... deftly written,' *Kate Kellaway, The Observer*. 'Newlyweds Lillian and Frank know precisely what hunger is. They are already living in hard times – Chrissie Gittins' play is set partly in 1934 – but to win £250 they become part of a matrimonial freak show in Blackpool, lying in glass coffins for 30 days without food on display to the gawping public. Only married a few hours, they began the strangest, cruellest honeymoon. Based on a news item from the Blackpool Gazette, this was a likeable tale of desperate things done in dire poverty.' *Elisabeth Mahoney, the Guardian*. 'Such a good piece of writing and a wonderful radio piece. She is a gifted writer,' *Patricia Routledge*. Directed by Kate McAll.

Chrissie's latest play *Life Assurance* was broadcast Saturday afternoon 19th February. It was Best Drama and Pick of the Day in the Daily Mail Weekend's preview of the week's best radio, chosen by Susan Jeffreys. She wrote 'This is what you want in a radio play – dark deeds in Victorian slums, a spate of suspicious deaths and, eventually, an inspector on the trail. The fact that the play is based on a true story makes it all the more horribly thrilling. **Sorcha Cusack** stars in this account of murderous women, dodgy insurance claims and the deadly power of 'flypaper water'. Not to be missed.' Also starred **Gillian Kearney** and **Jan Ravens**. Radio Choice, Daily Telegraph: 'a horrific tale of mass murders,' *Gillian Reynolds*. Directed by Claire Grove.

Chrissie has been commissioned to write a fourth play for BBC R4 - *Dinner in the Iguanodon* - for broadcast on Wednesday 11th January. To be directed in Bristol by Viv Beeby.

With Children and Young People

Chrissie has worked with children and young people for the Poetry Society, Apples and Snakes and the Arvon Foundation; her residencies have included prisons, a hospice, and an international school in Bangkok. She completed a Poetry Society Poetry Place at the Refugee Council in 1999 and was Writer-in-Residence with Maidstone Borough Council 2000/1. Chrissie was Poet-in-Residence with twelve primary schools in Southwark 2002/3 and she was Poet-in-Residence with Croydon Libraries 2003/4. She is part of the Poetry Society's *poetryclass* training team for teachers.

Comments from colleagues and children

Feedback from three of the ten Highland schools Chrissie visited autumn 2005

The children really enjoyed your visit and were very inspired by it. The staff that worked with you that day were most impressed with the way you handled the children and how you pitched the work shop at an appropriate level, which can be difficult with a small composite class. After your visit the children enjoyed reading and listening to your poems. They now demand a poem every day! I would strongly recommend your workshop to colleagues. Many thanks for coming this far north. *Graham Bruce, Head Teacher Durness Primary School*

Thanks again for coming to spend a day with us at Kyleakin Primary. The children really enjoyed themselves and learned a lot too. Here is some of the feedback straight from the kids ...

- Thank you very much!
- It was great fun!
- The poems we really enjoyed were 'Government Health Warning' (particularly the jelly – Danny), the one about the high chair, the hamster, Sam Sam, and Now You See Me.
- They made us giggle.
- We enjoyed writing the poems too. They were interesting and really made us think.
- We liked reading the poems out too at the end.
- Danny felt that he got sore knees sitting for a long time!

We are enjoying your book. Please come back and see us anytime. *Jane Fairley and P1-4, Kyleakin Primary School.*

(to the Highland Council) I just wanted to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit from Chrissie Gittins last Thursday. The work with the children was very well planned and paced and kept all the stages of children (P3 -7) enthusiastic and involved. It gives the children a taste of wider possibilities when they meet a "real" person who has actually published work, whether prose or poetry. Chrissie Gittins guided the children to produce their own excellent poems, and was a source of new ideas to me as their teacher. I do feel that, particularly for the very small schools, such occasional infusions of fresh ideas and approaches are extremely valuable. Even the most enthusiastic teacher

becomes a little jaded after teaching the same children for seven years! Thank you for making this visit a possibility. I do hope it can be repeated at some point. *Catriona McCowan, Head Teacher Applecross Primary School.*

Arvon residential course with Hayes School Sixth Form at Totleigh Barton, Devon

'I love listening to Chrissie Gittins read her poems. Her soft Lancashire voice is the perfect vehicle for the vivid imagery of her poems. We've used her at Arvon as tutor and guest, and her readings are always mesmerising.' *Ian Marchant, Centre Director, Arvon Foundation, Totleigh Barton.*

'The poetry sessions were superbly put together.' *John Budden, Head of English, Hayes Comprehensive School, Kent.*

Launch of Now You See Me, Now You ... at Ottakar's, Bromley

'one of the best events we've ever held,' *Stephanie Bryant, children's buyer.*

Visit to Glenfall Primary School, Cheltenham

'The children have been talking to me with affection about the afternoon Chrissie spent with us. They are quite discerning in their evaluation of the quality of their experiences. I have yet to hear a negative comment from them – they thoroughly enjoyed the way Chrissie brought her poetry, which appealed greatly, to life. Teachers were also quick to praise the quality of her poetry and presentation and have worked with their classes to produce a wealth of poems in the 'Chrissie Gittins' style.' *Anthony Sutcliffe, Headteacher*

Arvon residential course at The Hurst, Shropshire

'The balance of exercises to inspire poetry worked extremely well and as the week went on the girls began to see the transformative effect of sensitive tutorials and constructive criticism.' *Katie Adam, Cheltenham Ladies' College*

Visit to Marjorie McClure School, Chislehurst

'I would like to keep in touch with you, as finding someone who can tap into our pupils' huge range of ability and needs so readily, and with obvious enjoyment, is rare.' *Sheila Batchelor and all the pupils who participated in your lively workshops*

Bookings

If you'd like to book Chrissie for readings, talks or workshops please email chrissie.gittins@btinternet.com. For information about current readings please see the [Dates page](#)



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